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Watching and Waiting

A Daily Vigil Based on the O Antiphons

This series of prayers follows the ancient tradition of praying the “O Antiphons,” so called because each begins with the exclamation “O” and offers a different scriptural image for Jesus Christ (in helpfully expansive language). They are most familiar to us through the Advent carol “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

You might set aside nightly family prayer time for the last week of Advent, following the dates given here (December 17–23, ending the night before Christmas Eve), or adapt this ritual in another way that suits your Advent preparations.

—Rev. Andrew O’Neil,
St. Paul’s United Church, Riverview, NB



Day 1, December 17: O Wisdom



**O Wisdom, O holy Word of God,
you govern all creation with your revealed, compassionate care:
come and show your people the way to salvation.**

Welcoming the Light

*(After each response, light one of the Advent candles or a tea light.
Candles can also be lit before each prayer.)*

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God,

you govern all creation with your revealed, compassionate care:

come and show your people the way to salvation.

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," Voices United 1, v.2)

Praying for Watchfulness

God who compassionately leads us, we pray for our rededication to watchfulness. Make us alert to the need for reconciliation, justice, and peace; alert to the need for freeing prisoners of conscience, challenging powers and principalities, and liberating ourselves and others from the destructive tyranny of consumerism.

Make us alert to the ways in which truth itself has become a victim to ignorance.

God of Wisdom, come and show your people the way to liberation.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... *(silence)*

Refrain (choose one)

“Wait for the Lord,” *Voices United 22*

“Kindle a Flame,” *Voices United 19*

“Come Now, O God of Peace,” *Voices United 34*

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... *(silent prayer)*

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 2, December 18: O Adonai



**O Holy God of ancient days and today,
revealed to Moses at Sinai and to all people:
come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.**

*Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)*

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

O Holy God of ancient days and today,

revealed to Moses at Sinai and to all people:

come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United* 1, v.3)

Praying for Freedom

God who brings release to the captive, we pray for those imprisoned for their beliefs or by unjust laws. We pray for your people who continue to endure the violence or neglect of others. We pray for those who seek asylum on foreign shores, especially those who are held as prisoners to uncertainty, isolated from their families, or sent back to face the terror they sought to escape.

God of Mercy, open our hearts and homes. Come and set all your people free.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts... (*silence*)

Refrain (choose one)

“Wait for the Lord,” *Voices United* 22

“Kindle a Flame,” *Voices United* 19

“Come Now, O God of Peace,” *Voices United* 34

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 3, December 19: O Root of Jesse



**O Root of Jesse, you are raised up as a sign for all peoples;
leaders can only stand silent in your presence;
your people lift their hearts in worship before you.
Come to us, Living Hope.**

Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)

The God of all time and space is in this place.
Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.
Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.
Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.
Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

**O Root of Jesse, you are raised up as a sign for all peoples;
leaders can only stand silent in your presence;
your people lift their hearts in worship before you.
Come to us, Living Hope.**

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United 1*, v.4)

Praying for Transformation

Holy One, in Jesus you reveal true power in humility and true strength in peace. You pray that we all may be one, that we would seek the good of others before our own. As the nations rage, you come with no weapon and no threat, revealing the Way of Love: the soil in which change for the better takes root. Inspire us to be witnesses to truth, that we might share in the work of your kingdom: peace and justice and plenty for all. **God of Hope, we long for change. Bring peace to your world and people.**

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... (*silence*)

Refrain (choose one)

“Wait for the Lord,” *Voices United 22*

“Kindle a Flame,” *Voices United 19*

“Come Now, O God of Peace,” *Voices United 34*

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 4, December 20: O Key of David



**O Key of David, source of life and life eternal:
come, break down the prison walls of death
for those who dwell in the shadow of death.**

Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

**O Key of David, source of life and life eternal:
come, break down the prison walls of death
for those who dwell in the shadow of death.**

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United 1*, v.5)

Praying for Courage

God of Light, who suffers with us and accompanies us through the valley, we pray for your children who walk in shadow: the anxiety of diagnosis and the long night of treatment; the pain of grieving the living who suffer depression, addiction and dementia; the helplessness of accompanying loved ones through illness and death; the emptiness of loss and loneliness. Renew our courage and strengthen us in times of trial.

God of Healing, help us to see our neighbour's need, and to reach out in love.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... (*silence*)

Refrain (choose one)

"Wait for the Lord," *Voices United 22*

"Kindle a Flame," *Voices United 19*

"Come Now, O God of Peace," *Voices United 34*

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 5, December 21: O Dayspring



**O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice:
arise, shine on those who dwell in the shadow of death.**

*Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)*

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

**O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice:
arise, shine on those who dwell in the shadow of death.**

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United* 1, v.6)

Praying for Justice

God of promise, we pray for justice in our time: for healing, reconciliation and deepened relationship and trust among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in our lands; for respect and dignity among peoples of every race, creed and colour, gender expression and sexual orientation; for the fair and equitable treatment, employment and consideration of all people under the law.

Foster within us a longing not only for our own fulfillment, but the fullness of life for all.

God of Love, shape us according to your life-giving vision.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... (*silence*)

Refrain (choose one)

“Wait for the Lord,” *Voices United* 22

“Kindle a Flame,” *Voices United* 19

“Come Now, O God of Peace,” *Voices United* 34

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 6, December 22: O King of the Nations



**O God of all, joy of every human heart;
O Keystone of the mighty arch of humanity:
Come and unite your people whom you fashioned in all the earth.**

*Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)*

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

O God of all, joy of every human heart;

O Keystone of the mighty arch of humanity:

Come and unite your people whom you fashioned in all the earth.

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United 1*, v.7)

Praying for Respect

God of All, known by many names, we pray for our neighbours of many faiths and no faith, as we find your image in all people. We give you thanks for the beauty of diversity, the challenge of difference, and the joy of curiosity and discovery. We pray for mutuality and respect in all our relationships, as individuals and as communities. Set your love as a seal upon our hearts, that we might learn to see others as you do, as your beloved children.

God of Joy, unite us in heart and purpose by your love.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... (*silence*)

Refrain (choose one)

“Wait for the Lord,” *Voices United* 22

“Kindle a Flame,” *Voices United* 19

“Come Now, O God of Peace,” *Voices United* 34

Praying for the Pray-er

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

Day 7, December 23: O God with Us



**O Emmanuel, revealed hope and source of trust:
come and set us free for your work and witness.
Show us how to live your redeeming love.**

*Welcoming the Light
(candle-lighting)*

The God of all time and space is in this place.

Come, Creating God; shape us according to your hopeful vision.

Come, Living Christ; reveal to us your way of peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; stir us to the gift and joy of compassion.

Loving God, to you we raise our hearts and voices.

Shine your light of love in us and in all that we do.

Antiphon

O Emmanuel, revealed hope and source of trust:

come and set us free for your work and witness.

Show us how to live your redeeming love.

(or sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," *Voices United 1*, v.1)

Praying for Redemption

From the desert of exodus to water from the rock; from the valley of dry bones to the mount of transfiguration; from the cradle to the cross to the empty tomb; you, O God, redeem life from death. Our story of faith is a story of redeeming: hope from despair, peace from strife, joy from grief and love from loneliness and fear. As your people, we pray that the ways of life would prevail. We pray that you would transform your world and your people to be bearers of light and life and love.

God of all times and places, breathe life into your people and world.

We pray these things and offer now the unspoken prayers of our hearts ... (*silence*)

Hymn (choose one or more)

"God of All Places," *Voices United 4*

"People Look East," *Voices United 9*

"There's a Voice in the Wilderness Crying," *Voices United 18*

"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," *Voices United 44*

"Of the Father's Love Begotten," *Voices United 61*

"O Day of God Draw Nigh," *Voices United 688*

Praying for the Prayer

As we end this time of prayer, Loving God, we pray also for ourselves, for those who are gathered this day...

We pray for peace within our souls, borne of trust in you, your faithfulness, and your presence in all things.

We pray for strength to lift our voices for what is good and right to speak with those who have been shut out, shouted down, or forgotten.

We pray for the courage to speak truth in love, the compassion to listen for the brokenness of others, and to hear your voice in their words.

We pray for your healing Spirit upon all whom we call to mind... (*silent prayer*)

We pray these things in the name of the One Who Comes, Jesus the Christ, the One who is Wisdom, Freedom, Transformation, Courage, Justice, Respect, Redemption; come to us, abide with us, our Lord, Emmanuel. Amen.

The O Antiphons

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you govern all creation with your revealed, compassionate care:
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